

Message Text

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PAGE 01 WELLIN 00994 140300Z

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SUBJECT: PRESS REPORTS USG SEEKING PORT ACCESS FOR NUCLEAR SHIPS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. APRIL 12 AND 13 PAPERS CARRIED LEAD STORIES ON USG REQUEST FOR PORT ACCESS FOR NPWS. ACCORDING TO REPORTS "RELIABLE GOVERNMENT SOURCES" HAD INDICATED OVERTURES WERE BEING MADE. IN RESPONSE TO FOLLOW-UP PRESS INQUIRIES PRIME MINISTER ROWLING AND MINISTER DEFENSE FRASER SAID NO FORMAL APPROACHES HAD BEEN RECEIVED. END SUMMARY.

2. TEXT OF APRIL 12 WELLINGTON "DOMINION" FRONT PAGE STORY HEADLINED "U.S.SEEKS PORT ACCESS FOR NUCLEAR SHIPS" FOLLOWS:
QUOTE

THE UNITED STATES WANT PERMISSION FOR ITS NUCLEAR-POWERED WARSHIPS TO USE NEW ZEALAND PORTS. AMERICAN OVERTURES ARE BEING MADE IN NEW ZEALAND, RELIABLE GOVERNMENT SOURCES INDICATED LAST NIGHT. THE MATTER IS EXPECTED TO BE TAKEN UP WITH NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT LEADERS VISITING WASHINGTON DURING THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND FORMER DEFENCE MINISTER, MR. FAULKNER, WILL ATTEND THE ANZUS COUNCIL MEETING LATER
UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 WELLIN 00994 140300Z

THIS MONTH.

THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. ROWLING, WILL MEET PRESIDENT FORD IN WASHINGTON AFTER THE COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT TALKS NEXT MONTH.

IN THE PAST THE GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN A FIRM LINE AGAINST NUCLEAR-POWERED SHIPS ENTERING NEW ZEALAND PORTS, THOUGH A FEW VISITED THE COUNTRY SOME YEARS AGO. AFTER THE REACTION TO THIS VISIT IT WAS DECIDED NO NUCLEAR-POWERED SHIPS COULD VISIT NEW ZEALAND -- INCLUDING THOSE FROM AMERICA AND BRITAIN, WITH WHOM NEW ZEALAND HAS TREATY ARRANGEMENTS.

GOVERNMENT SOURCES BELIEVE THIS HAS NOT CAUSED ANY WEAKENING OF THE ANZUS ALLIANCE.

HOWEVER, THE U.S. CONGRESS HAS NOW ACCEPTED PROVISION FOR LIABILITY IN THE EVENT OF ACCIDENTS ON NUCLEAR-POWERED SHIPS IN FOREIGN PORTS.

PREVIOUSLY THERE WAS NO ACCEPTANCE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUCH MISHAPS.

THE CHANGE WOULD REQUIRE A GOVERNMENT POLICY REVIEW, THE SOURCES SAID. THEY COULD NOT PREDICT THE GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE, BUT THEY SAID THE PRESSURES WOULD INCREASE FOR NEW ZEALAND TO ACCEPT THE AMERICAN APPROACHES.

IT IS BELIEVED SIMILAR APPROACHES HAVE BEEN MADE TO AUSTRALIA.

THE NATIONAL PARTY SEEMS TO BE AWARE OF THE AMERICAN FEELERS. SEVERAL TIMES IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. ROWLING, HAS BEEN ASKED IN PARLIAMENT TO SAY HE UNRESERVEDLY BACK THE ANZUS TREATY.

THESE QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ASKED BY THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, MR. MULDOON, AND THE FORMER MINISTER OF DEFENCE, MR. THOMSON.

OPPOSITION FRONT-BENCHERS HAVE ALSO ASKED MR. ROWLING TO SAY CATEGORICALLY HE HAS NO RESERVATIONS ABOUT AMERICAN NUCLEAR-POWERED WARSHIPS ENTERING NEW ZEALAND WATERS. END QTE

3. APRIL 12 EVENING PAPERS CARRIED STATEMENTS BY MINISTER OF DEFENSE FRASER AND SECDEF ROBERTSON TO THE EFFECT

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PAGE 03 WELLIN 00994 140300Z

THAT NO FORMAL APPROACHES HAD BEEN MADE TO GNZ.

APRIL 14 "DOMINION" CARRIES FOLLOWING STORY BASED ON INTERVIEW WITH PM ROWLING: QTE. THE ANZUS TREATY, LINKING AMERICA, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND, DID NOT STAND OR FALL ON THE QUESTION OF VISITS FROM NUCLEAR-POWERED WARSHIPS, THE PRIME MINISTER, MR. ROWLING, SAID LAST NIGHT.

HE WAS QUESTIONED ON A DOMINION REPORT THAT THE UNITED STATES IS SEEKING PERMISSION FOR NUCLEAR-POWERED WARSHIPS

TO USE NEW ZEALAND PORTS.

MR. ROWLING SAID NO FORMAL APPROACHES HAD BEEN RECEIVED FROM WASHINGTON FOR SUCH SHIPS TO USE NEW ZEALAND WATERS OR PORTS, BUT HE AGREED THERE HAD BEEN "FEELERS".

A NEW POLICY COULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE GOVERNMENT IN VIEW OF THE AMERICAN CONGRESSIONAL ACCEPTANCE OF LIABILITY IN THE EVENT OF ACCIDENTS ON NUCLEAR-POWERED SHIPS, MR. ROWLING SAID.

PRESENT GOVERNMENT POLICY PREVENTS SUCH SHIPS FROM ENTERING NEW ZEALAND PORTS.

TILL RECENTLY, AMERICA DID NOT ACCEPT LIABILITY FOR ANY ACCIDENTS WHICH MIGHT OCCUR IN A FOREIGN PORT AS A RESULT OF THE PRESENCE OF ONE OF ITS NUCLEAR-POWERED SHIPS.

THE CONGRESSIONAL DECISION TO ACCEPT LIABILITY WAS A NEW STEP "AND IN THE LIGHT OF THIS THERE WILL BE SOME APPROACH TO US TO HAVE A LOOK AT THE SITUATION," MR. ROWLING SAID. "IF THAT COMES WE WILL HAVE A LOOK AT THE SITUATION TO SEE WHAT THE FULL IMPLICATIONS ARE TO NEW ZEALAND." MR. ROWLING SAID HE CONSIDERED ANZUS AS THE BEST POSSIBLE DEFENSIVE ARRANGEMENT THAT NEW ZEALAND COULD HAVE.

IT WAS A NATURAL ALLIANCE AND THOUGH IT EVOLVED AFTER WORLD WAR II AS A PURELY MILITARY TREATY, IT HAD DEVELOPED OVER THE YEARS INTO A MUCH WIDER FORUM IN WHICH RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES, NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA COULD BE DISCUSSED.

"I THINK THAT BECAUSE OF THIS IT IS AN ARRANGEMENT WHICH IS LESS LIKELY TO UPSET IF, IN A SMALL AREA, THERE IS NOT A COMPLETE AGREEMENT AMONG THE PARTNERS," MR. ROWLING SAID. "FOR EXAMPLE, NEW ZEALAND HAS PRETTY STRONG VIEWS ON UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 WELLIN 00994 140300Z

A NUCLEAR-FREE ZONE IN THE PACIFIC. ONE WOULD NOT EXPECT THE UNITED STATES, AS A NUCLEAR POWER, TO BE TAKING THE INITIATIVE IN A QUESTION LIKE THAT." WHATEVER THE RESULT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY RETHINK ON THE SUBJECT OF VISITS FROM NUCLEAR-POWERED SHIPS, MR. ROWLING SAID HE TOOK THE VIEW THAT THE ANZUS ARRANGEMENT DID NOT DEPEND ON A PARTICULAR ISSUE OF THIS KIND. "IT'S A MUCH MORE WIDE-RANGING OPERATION," HE SAID MR. ROWLING SAID NEW ZEALAND ACCEPTED OBLIGATIONS INSIDE ITS INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS. "BUT INSIDE THOSE AGAIN ARE ITS FIRST OBLIGATIONS TO ITS OWN PEOPLE," HE SAID. "YOU'VE GOT TO DECIDE WHETHER ALL THE RISK HAS BEEN TAKEN OUT OF NUCLEAR-POWERED VESSELS.

"AFTER ALL IT MIGHT NOT BE MANY YEARS BEFORE WE HAVE

NUCLEAR-POWERED MERCHANT SHIPS."

ASKED IF ANY OF THE AMERICAN WARSHIPS LIKELY TO VISIT
NEW ZEALAND WOULD BE NUCLEAR ARMED, MR. ROWLING SAID THE
AMERICANS WOULD NOT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, DISCLOSE
WHETHER A SHIP WAS CARRYING NUCLEAR ARMS.

HE SAID THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT WAS FIRMLY
COMMITTED TO A POLICY OF NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT BUT IT WOULD
BE UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT THE UNITED STATES TO TAKE
UNILATERAL ACTION ON THIS ISSUE. END QUOTE
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